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The Path Toward Religious and Cultural Inclusivity: The Need for Critical Inquiry

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ABSTRACT:
The following thesis seeks to explain the essential practice of critical inquiry in the religious sphere. It explores Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim attitudes on the subject of critical inquiry and assesses how these varying stances affect engagement in interreligious dialogue. The thesis presents the impact a religion has on a society's perception of other religious and cultural practices. Overall the thesis argues for more open-minded attitudes and the need for religious and cultural inclusivity by promoting the proposition that practicing critical inquiry is a necessity to moving forward.

OUTLINE:

Personal Note:

One of the most important things I believe a liberal arts education has equipped me with is an understanding of how to approach situations with well-rounded views from multiple perspectives. In my studies with an Individualized major in Religion, Society, and Culture, I have become driven to express the importance of this approach when it comes to our current religious and cultural climate in the US. With the support of the Theology and Anthropology departments at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University, as well as studies in History, Philosophy, and Peace Studies, I have learned the necessity of understanding the source of beliefs— where they come from and why they matter. It is my hope that each of these disciplines is distinguishable in this work in a way that showcases each one's importance to the issue I have become so passionate about.

Introduction

Religious institutions have a powerful, influential ability to gather the people of its faith together for any cause deemed central by the institution. This kind of influence over many people has both positive and negative effects, as does any kind of power source. When religions come together with openness and willingness to learn from each other, positive relations typically follow. Social justice issues can be addressed such as poverty, women's rights, or economic oppression. People across religious differences experience friendship and camaraderie. When religions come together without openness or a willingness to learn, however, arguments, debates, and clashes of ideas and cultures block the way for any kind of fruitful dialogue. Negative outcomes can also occur when religions do not come together at all, but rather coexist and interact in ways that are not

intentional. Therefore it is important for religions to be aware of the interactions and dialogues that take place, and the effects these relationships have on daily life, because when negative relationships are given time to fester it has disastrous repercussions: wars, death, terrorist attacks, hate crimes, and the socialization of hate from one generation to the next. Both religious leaders and religious individuals in any given community who fail to approach dialogue with an open mind will remain stagnant in a faith that never questions and may follow a religious institution's doctrine blindly. This kind of approach is dangerous for interactions between differing faiths in a globalizing world. Rather, practicing critical inquiry will be essential for promoting positive change and relations among peoples of differing faiths. Religious institutions and individuals that actively ask questions, explore their faith openly, and challenge their leaders and members to partake in interreligious dialogue have positive effects on the rapport between religions and cultures. These kinds of actions are precisely what the practice of critical inquiry requires, as will be discussed in detail in the next section. Being able to approach and contribute to dialogue with open-mindedness allows for a more inclusive, peaceful, and globalized world. Therefore, to reach this ideal, practicing critical inquiry is key.

What does it mean to practice critical inquiry?

The philosopher René Descartes is an appropriate figure to discuss in the discussion of critical inquiry. Defined as the process of evaluating and asking questions from multiple perspectives, critical inquiry certainly played a large role in Descartes's philosophy of doubt. Descartes asked a plethora of questions to go so far as to doubt his own existence. Descartes's mission was to discover the truth, and to do so he realized he would have to try to dismantle all the things he had grown up believing to be true. His

method was to disassemble these things he had taken for granted and from there practiced "doubting everything that can be doubted, and then, on the pure remainder of certain truth, beginning the process of constructing an indubitable system of knowledge."[1] Of course, for the purposes laid out ahead, this position is extreme. However, the foundation is extremely important: practice constant questioning.

Practicing critical inquiry requires in-depth thinking and stresses the necessity of asking questions. These questions should not only involve general thoughts about the topic or dilemma, but also personal reactions to such topics, as well as analyzing the reasons for those reactions in order to provide a deeper, and interior look at oneself. It necessitates taking a close look at what is being proposed, dissecting what you believe to be truthful from the argument, confronting what is not compatible with your current thought process, and why this is so. In doing so, your thoughts and beliefs on the topic will be challenged and re-examined. Those who practice critical inquiry, therefore, must be ready to doubt anything and everything that they had believed to be true. It might seem counterintuitive that such a thought process should be practiced alongside religious belief, but there is a dire need to promote the practice of critical inquiry in conversation between *and* within religious faiths. Raimon Panikkar, for example, states that dialogue "must begin with my questioning myself and the relativity of my beliefs (which does not mean their relativism), accepting the challenge of a change, a conversion, and the risk of upsetting my traditional patterns."[2] After all, is a person a true believer if they merely

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[1] Louis P. Pojman and Lewis Vaughn, *Philosophy: the quest for truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 199.
[2] Catherine Cornille, *The im-possibility of interreligious dialogue* (New York: Crossroad Publ, 2008), 89.

follow their religion's teaching without critically evaluating their own beliefs? Questions, doubting, and true faith actually go hand in hand.

Terrence Tilley argues is his book *Faith: What it is and what it isn't* that you can't have mature, decent faith unless you criticize and examine it and that "an unexamined faith is not worth believing."[3] Therefore, Tilley encourages the appraisal of faith, noting his awareness that many religious leaders discourage this type of consideration of faith. Tilley says, "Faith is risky. To have faith requires having the courage to risk commitment, knowing that it is possible that one's pattern of faith in worship and sacrifice may be wrong. Coping with fragile traditions and risky faith does not require better epistemological foundations, but open-eyed courage tempered with thoughtful reflection on faith and faiths."[4] Critical inquiry certainly helps to address this approach to understanding faith. Simply being aware that your way of worship may be wrong is an incredibly daring suggestion, but this awareness is produced from questioning and doubting that contributes to a healthy relationship between doubt and faith, helping the faith itself to in fact flourish.

Lesley Hazleton, a British-American author of *The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad*, tackles the relationship between doubt and faith in her TED Talk *The Doubt Essential to Faith*. She asks the question, "What is imperfect about doubt?"[5] She argues, as the title of her talk suggests, that doubt is actually necessary to faith. She says, "Abolish all doubt, and what is left is not faith, but absolute, heartless conviction. You

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[3] Terrence Tilley, *Faith: What It Is and What It Isn't* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 102.
[4] Ibid,. 126.
[5] *The doubt essential to faith*, Directed by Lesley Hazleton. June 2013, www.ted.com/talks/lesley_hazleton_the_doubt_essential_to_faith/transcript?language=en .

are certain that you possess the Truth…and this certainty quickly devolves into dogmatism and righteousness. By which I mean a demonstrative overweening pride in being so very right, in short, the arrogance of fundamentalism."[6] She goes on to say that fundamentalists never ask questions, but always have answers. Answers they impose on others as being the only right answer. This, Hazleton argues, is not faith. Faith, she insists, is not this easy. Faith, rather, "involves an ongoing struggle, a continual questioning of what we think we know, a wrestling with issues and ideas. It goes hand in hand with doubt."[7] Plainly speaking, practicing critical inquiry allows for a stronger, more fully realized faith.

Doubt, therefore, plays an important role for growth in one's faith. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two. In a study on the relationship between religious doubt and achievement among adolescents, researchers found that:

> "Adolescents can engage in the process of investing, attaching, and pledging allegiance to a belief system and doubt at the same time. If doubt can coexist with committing proclivities, then it could also be a potential prod for thought and development and operate as a positive and beneficial tool in a journey toward robust faith. This challenges the common misperception of doubt as only a belief destroyer."[8]

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[6] Ibid,.
[7] Ibid,.
[8] Keith A. Puffer, Kris G. Pence, T. Martin Graverson, Michael Wolfe, Ellen Pate, and Stacy Clegg, "Religious Doubt and Identity Formation: Salient Predictors of Adolescent Religious Doubt," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 36, no. 4 (2008): 270-84. doi:10.1177/009164710803600403: 11.

It is important to note, therefore, that doubt is *not* the same as unbelief. Unbelief is rejecting an idea outright, a response that the idea is completely untrue. Doubt, on the other hand, "is a hesitant reaction, a temporary and divided state of mind."[9]

This hesitant reaction creates the opportunity for open-mindedness to enter into conversation, a necessity for discussion between religious others. Tom Allen, a Presbyterian, while in conversation with Reverend Will Ingram, stated, "Doubt is where people discuss, where they challenge themselves."[10] This particular observation about doubt is critical when considering interreligious dialogue. Doubt welcomes open-mindedness, a necessity for interreligious dialogue. Religious leaders must incorporate this way of thinking in order to successfully communicate with one another because absolutism among religions does not foster the bettering of relationships among religious others. Imagine, for example, a dialogue about God between a Christian fundamentalist and an aggressive atheist. The dialogue is sure to be hardly a dialogue at all but a heated debate because "both firmly believe they have a monopoly on truth."[11] If there is no room to learn from the other, there cannot possibly be a fruitful discussion and instead anger, hatred, and misunderstandings between the two multiply. Practicing critical inquiry serves as an important reminder that no one person can have the monopoly on truth and shows that believing this way is dangerous, as we see from the violent results of extremist

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[9] Ibid,. 3.
[10] Katy Lemay, "CAN WE DOUBT?" *The Presbyterian Record* 137 (2013): 36-40. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1347611652?accountid=14070: 2.
[11] Guy Collins, *Faithful Doubt The Wisdom of Uncertainty* (Cambridge, England: Lutterworth Pr, 2015), 4.

groups stemming from any religion—the KKK from Christianity, the BBS from Buddhism, or ISIS from Islam.[12]

It is important to point out in this discussion of critical inquiry that the word doubt has many associations. Author Phillip Moffitt distinguishes three different types of doubt, which he labels as the following: skeptical, nihilistic, and reactive doubt.[13] Critical inquiry refers back to skeptical doubt. This doubt encourages you to be "skeptical of blindly accepting beliefs."[14] It is a type of doubt that cultivates mindfulness and allows a person to be comfortable with knowing, and more importantly *not* knowing. Moffitt says, "This insight leads to the first step in working with doubt: cultivating 'don't know mind,' which dispels the myth that you are always supposed to know, never to be in doubt."[15] It is here that the practice of critical inquiry is at work. As Moffitt points out, "New knowledge creates new uncertainties, so that which is causing you doubt can be appreciated because it signifies new possibilities to learn about yourself."[16]

Nihilistic and reactive doubts are two other varieties of doubt, and are not the kind associated with healthy critical inquiry. Nihilistic doubt is cynical. It is suspicious, close-minded and pessimistic. It involves the belief that everything you know is in fact faulty or exploitive. As Moffitt points out, this kind of doubt is not genuine doubt at all. Rather it

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[12] While many Christians, Buddhists, and Muslims support that these fundamentalist, terrorist organizations are not 'true' people of the faith, the fact remains that the organizations grew out of these particular religious cultures, regardless of whether or not they are true practitioners of the faith they exploit.
[13] Phillip Moffitt, "Lost in Doubt?" Lost in Doubt? | Dharma Wisdom. http://dharmawisdom.org/teachings/articles/lost-doubt.
[14] Ibid.,
[15] Ibid,.
[16] Ibid,.

is a "belief system disguised as doubt."[17] In order to remove this kind of doubt from one's thought process one must practice critical inquiry, the skeptical doubt. One must become aware of the cynical doubts playing around in one's head in order to gain an understanding as to where they come from. To discern their origins, the skeptical doubt must take a seat with these other thoughts and "question the validity of the nihilism."[18]

The last kind of doubt that Moffitt defines is reactive doubt, which is "simply a mental state that has arisen because the right conditions were present."[19] An example of this type of doubt would be suffering doubt of your own self worth after experiencing a failure. The experience of failure created the right conditions for a mental doubt of one's self worth. Practicing mindfulness that is cultivated through critical inquiry allows a person to recognize when the doubts present are just a matter of particular conditions, and will dissolve when that condition is no longer playing a factor in an individual's life (such as when the embarrassment from the experience of failure is no longer active in the person's mind, and the doubt of one's self worth is extinguished).

Fundamentalisms in Christianity: the need for doubt

Christianity, like many other religions, has an unfortunate, long history of claiming to have the monopoly on truth and thus viewing doubt as unacceptable. Yet, it is doubt and discontent that led to the numerous splits and sects within Christianity. The diversity of traditions under Christianity is due to doubting the effectiveness of a previous tradition, resulting in a variety of Christian sects, and yet, sharing in the same faith and

[17] Ibid,.
[18] Ibid,.
[19] Ibid,.

belief are incredibly important in order to be part of the Christian family. As Stephen Prothero says in his book *God is Not One: The eight rival religions that run the world*, "To be a Christian has typically been to care about both faith and belief…today the price of admission to the Christian family continues to be orthodoxy (right thought) rather than orthopraxy (right practice)."[20] This would suggest that performing the actions of the faith on their own do not make up for thoughts of doubt. For example, an unscholarly but popular Protestant view claims that faith alone, not the actions of the faith, provides salvation and admission into heaven, therefore leaving no room for doubt.

It is refreshing to know, however, that this sort of close-minded or negative outlook on the relationship between doubt and faith is not consistent among all Christians. There are many Christian communities that are supportive of members that are struggling with the relationship between doubt and faith and reassure these members that doubting is a part of faith— nothing to be shameful of because it is a common and necessary struggle to grow in your faith. Then again, there are always sources from other Christian communities that suggest more negative or limiting perspectives. In answering the question "What does the Bible say about doubt?" a conservative, Protestant Christian refers to Descartes and Buddha—commonly understood as supporters of doubt—and harshly remarks, "Instead of taking the advice of skeptics and false teachers, we will see what the Bible has to say."[21] This author claims that, "Doubt is a tool of Satan to make us lack confidence in God's Word and consider His judgment unlikely…Faith is trusting God even when His plan goes against human reason or experience…the Bible says that

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[20] Stephen R Prothero, *God is not one: the eight rival religions that run the world* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 69.
[21] GotQuestions.org, "What does the Bible say about doubt?" GotQuestions.org, January 04, 2017, accessed August 14, 2017, http://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-doubt.html.

doubt is a destroyer of life."[22] This interpretation of what Scripture has to say about doubt is in stark contrast to some of the other answers that appear across Christian communities for any doubting Christian seeking answers or support, evidence that critical inquiry is not being applied in all facets of Christian lives.

Richard Robinson, a philosopher of religions, might suggest that such an approach to the relationship between doubt and faith is contingent upon a very specific definition of what it means to have faith from a Christian perspective. Robinson would argue that the Christian definition and understanding of faith first and foremost requires the assumption that there is indeed a God.[23] To doubt your faith, therefore, is an explicit challenge to the belief of whether or not God exists, and of course, whether or not God exists in the same form as taught in Christianity. This is a feasible argument as to why some Christians such as the author previously mentioned take an immediate defensive position when encountering the word 'doubt.'

Despite these more limiting interpretations of what it means to have faith and what it means to doubt, the concept of doubt does appear multiple times in the Bible, and not always in negative or harsh ways as one might assume. For example, at the end of Matthew's Gospel after the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples meet Jesus on a mountain in Galilee, where it is said they (or some of them) doubted. It says:

> "When they [the disciples] saw him, they worshipped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in

[22] Ibid,.
[23] E. D. Klemke, A. David. Kline, and Robert Hollinger, *Philosophy: contemporary perspectives on perennial issues* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1994), 361.

> the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.'"[24]

What is crucial to notice about this mentioning of doubt is that even though the disciples doubted, they also worshipped. The relationship between doubt and faith did not need to be held in tension, and in fact, Jesus does not allow their doubt to deter him from asking them to be disciples to the rest of the world, teaching them everything Jesus had taught them previously. There seems to be recognition of doubt as a part of the human experience, and it is not a swaying factor in Jesus's trust in the disciples to continue carrying on his message.

There is another passage in Matthew that explicitly mentions doubt and this is found in the story of Jesus walking on water. When Jesus approaches the boat, walking on water, the disciples are overcome by fear. However one disciple, Peter, gets out of the boat onto the water and begins walking toward Jesus. After realizing how strong the winds are and becoming afraid, Peter begins to sink. Jesus immediately saves him and says, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"[25] Again, there is recognition of the existence of doubt, and yet there is no sense of Jesus turning away from those that do so. Jesus does not hesitate in saving Peter, even though it was doubt that caused Peter to begin to sink.

Another place where doubt is mentioned is found in James 1:5-8. This passage seems to mention doubt in a more negative light. It says:

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[24] Donald Senior, John J. Collins, and Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, *The Catholic study Bible the New American Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Matt 28:17-20.
[25] Ibid,. Matt 14:31.

> "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."[26]

Such a passage could be cause for alarm among any Christian doubting their faith, perhaps instilling fear, or even perhaps a desire to suppress the doubts. Therefore, more open-minded interpretations of passages such as these are central to fostering an understanding and supportive Christian community. For example, understanding that doubt can be bad in some situations, such as doubting a friendship or one's self worth, is an important understanding for the general application of doubt in daily life. However, a passage such as this does not have to be interpreted as suggesting that doubt and strong faith cannot go together. If someone is struggling with their faith and is made to be ashamed of their doubt, true faith is not given the proper circumstances to grow. These circumstances are essential, as a refusal to acknowledge the doubts or explore them can lead to fundamentalism.

An example of fundamentalism in Christianity can be seen in evangelical communities, which stem from a conservative branch of Protestantism. Of course, conservatism exists in many religions and in many branches. According to the *Fundamentalism Project* regarding conservatism in Christianity, "Seventy-two percent of Americans say the Bible is the Word of God, with over half of that number (39 percent total) saying that it should be taken literally. Almost two-thirds say they are certain that

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[26] Ibid,. James 1:5-8.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Nearly three-fourths say they believe in life after death. And almost half (44 percent) could be called "creationists", since they believe that God created the world in 'pretty much its present form' sometime in the last ten thousand years."[27]

It is important to note that not all of these people can be considered fundamentalists, however. What make the Christian fundamentalists unique are their beliefs on what they consider requirements to achieve salvation. For Christian fundamentalists, "an individual decision to follow Jesus will suffice for salvation. They are concerned not only about their own eternal fate but also about the destiny of those around them."[28] Evangelicals and their movements place great importance on a very literal understanding of the Bible and use these interpretations to oppose more liberal understandings of scripture. The movement itself became more apparent as they began to play a more predominant role in politics starting in the 1980s, opposing views such as "abortions, women priests or ministers, even overt homosexual participation in the life of the Church."[29] There is an evident desire to convert other religious groups, or other Christians who do not share the same fundamentalist approach to the faith. This adamant desire can result in a sense of superiority, and while evangelicals are not necessarily supporting violence, when others do not convert it can promote harmful and long-lasting hostilities between communities.

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[27] Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms observed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 2.
[28] Ibid,. 2-3.
[29] Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: cross cultural explorations of human beliefs* (New Jersey: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 154.

Fundamentalisms in Buddhism: the need for doubt

In a much more dramatic fashion that the Christian tradition, the entire Buddhist tradition started on the premise of critical inquiry, doubt, and questions. The story goes that prince Siddhartha Gautama, Buddha, led a sheltered and privileged life away from suffering, disease, and death. When he snuck away to explore the world outside his walls he witnessed a sick person, an old man, a corpse, and a holy man. After observing these four things he took up the life of a holy man—more specifically, a wandering holy man. As Prothero says in his book, "In the Western religions, wandering typically arrives as punishment. It is the spanking you get after you eat the apple or kill your brother. But for Siddhartha wandering arrived as an opportunity."[30] His wanderings began because he questioned the way he had been living his life. He doubted that his way of life was the right way for him, and made a drastic change in becoming a holy man in an event known as the "Great Departure."

Buddha went out and experienced the world outside of his sheltering walls, and so it is clear to see where Buddhism puts a high stress on experience rather than belief. It therefore does not require a doctrinal element in order for it to be successful and take root. In a meditation known as *vipassana*, Buddhists focus on feelings, thoughts, and sensations instead of breath.[31] This is to serve as a reminder that all feelings come and go, and as a German poet named Rainer Maria Rilke has said, "no feeling is final."[32] In other words, there is constant change in feelings, thoughts, and sensations. How then could

[30] Prothero, *God is not one: the eight rival religions that run the world*, 171.
[31] Ibid,. 178.
[32] Ibid,. 178.

doubt be seen as dangerous? In Buddhism it is believed that thoughts will continue to ebb and flow constantly throughout one's lifetime.

Although Buddhism contains the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, these teachings are not dogma. In fact, Buddhism encourages exploration and experimentation within those teachings in order to learn on one's own whether or not these teachings and examples set forth by the Buddha are valuable. Buddha teaches that one should not believe things just because scripture says it; it is encouraged instead to follow beliefs based on one's own experiences. As Prothero relates, "Anything that comes to you secondhand is worse than worthless; trust only what you yourself have seen to be true in your own experience."[33] A Zen proverb says that a "Zen student must have great faith, great doubt, and great determination."[34]

Lest anyone begin to think all Buddhists have successfully achieved the right balance between faith and doubt, fundamentalism does indeed exist among Buddhists as well. The Western portrayal of Buddhism tends to be extremely secular, but throughout its history Buddhism has dealt with orthodox belief. As the *Fundamentalism Project* concludes, it has "contributed as much as any religious tradition to the definition of particular cultural, social, and political identities."[35] For example, Buddhist fundamentalism and nationalism in Sri Lanka was born as a result of coping with the modernization that accompanied colonization.

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[33] Ibid,. 199.
[34] Barbara O'Brien, "How Buddhism Understands Faith and Doubt," ThoughtCo, accessed August 14, 2017, http://www.thoughtco.com/faith-doubt-and-buddhism-449721.
[35] Marty and Appleby, *Fundamentalisms observed*, 628.

In Sri Lanka, the group known as the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), or the Buddhist Power Force, attempts to revert to pre-colonial lifestyles and practices. The majority of Buddhists living in the country are Sinhalese. Speaking of Buddhism in terms of race, the monk Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero says, "This country belongs to the Sinhalese, and it is the Sinhalese who built up its civilization, culture, and settlements. The white people created all the problems…We are trying to…go back to the country of the Sinhalese. Until we correct this, we are going to fight."[36] He argues that the British destroyed the island and that all of its current issues are a result of what he refers to as "'outsiders'. By that he means Tamils and Muslims."[37] While it is true that a small portion of the Tamils in Sri Lanka did arrive in the country from India as tea plantation workers, "most of them, and most of the Muslims, are as Sri Lankan as the Sinhalese, with centuries-old roots."[38]

Ultimately the extremism stems from a desire to maintain their vision of Buddhism. Myanmar has also experienced anti-Muslim rhetoric by a Buddhist faction known as the 969 movement.[39] Organizations such as these lack the open-mindedness necessary for a peaceful world, and consume themselves with a vision of the future that would obey their idea of what the world should be, and not how it really is.

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[36] Charles Haviland, "The darker side of Buddhism," BBC News, May 30, 2015, accessed March 10, 2018, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32929855.
[37] Ibid,.
[38] Ibid,.
[39] Ibid,.

Fundamentalisms in Islam: the need for doubt

Similar to Buddhist origins, the Islamic tradition also seems to have started on the premise of critical inquiry, doubt, and questions. In her TED Talk on doubt and faith, Hazleton reminds her audience that it was a man experiencing great doubt that started the Islamic faith. When Gabriel first confronted Muhammad, Muhammad was not overcome with conviction, but with doubt. She argues that this reaction is what makes it a real, human response. In other words, reacting with doubt plays a significant part in the human experience.[40] She says, "… all exploration, physical or intellectual, is inevitably in some sense, an act of transgression, of crossing boundaries."[41] She describes how conservative Muslim theologians want to erase this part of Muhammad's history, insisting that Muhammad never experienced doubt.

Indeed when looking into the Islamic tradition of today that Muhammad brought to life it may seem from a Western standpoint that there is no room for doubt, following a similar line of thought as the Christian tradition. Part of this conception of Islam is due to the understanding that Muslims believe the Qur'an is the untranslatable word of God, leaving no space to doubt the authority of the Qur'an. However, the religion itself seems to focus less on belief and more on obedience. This is one specific area that is in contrast to Christianity's approach. Islam, unlike Christianity, places greater emphasis on orthopraxy (right action) than orthodoxy (right doctrine).[42] Maybe here then there is room for doubt. However, doubts seem not to take as prevalent of a role as perhaps viewed in Christianity or Buddhism as it does in Islam. Jon Armajani, professor of Theology at St.

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[40] Lesley Hazleton, *The doubt essential to faith.*
[41] Ibid,.
[42] Prothero, *God is not one: the eight rival religions that run the world*, 32.

John's University, says, "Typically doubt does not play a significant role in Islam. During the modern and contemporary periods, many Muslims have viewed doubt as one of many ways that non-Muslim westerners have attempted to undercut Islam."[43]

If actions make or break the Islamic faith rather than the concern over belief, there would supposedly be room for doubt as long as you are an obedient *practitioner* of the faith. However, because the religion requires surrender to God, doubting has the potential to be interpreted as a hindrance. As author of *Encounters in Faith* Peter Feldmeier states, "A devout Muslim knows what God demands. These demands are not questioned—they are surrendered to."[44] Interestingly enough, however, doubt is technically *not* the opposite of surrendering to God. Rather, Feldmeier explains, the opposite of faith in Islam is called *jahil*, "which represents someone arrogant and quick-tempered. This is someone who has surrendered not to God but to one's passions, to one's ego."[45]

Many of the mystics of Islam, known as Sufis, will actively acknowledge the necessity of doubt in the faith. One such Sufi, Omar Shahid, encourages this practice lest individuals "become chained to their views, closed-minded and hostile to those who think differently."[46] Shahid further explains Sufism as the heart of Islam, with Sufism as the heart and Islam as like the body. He says, "Take away the heart and you're left with a mere shell."[47] Shahid encourages any Muslim doubting the faith to explore whether or

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[43] Jon Armajani, "Islam and Doubt," E-mail message to author, April 18, 2018.
[44] Peter Feldmeier, *Encounters in faith: Christianity in interreligious dialogue* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011), 108.
[45] Ibid,. 96.
[46] Omar Shahid. "Theres More to Islam: A Message to Muslims Doubting Their Faith." Omar Shahid, December 26, 2014, accessed February 08, 2018, https://omarshahid.co.uk/2014/02/05/theres-more-to-islam-a-message-to-muslims-doubting-their-faith/.
[47] Ibid,.

not the source of their doubt is surfacing from the lack of working toward a deeper spirituality in their day-to-day practice of Islam.

Another Muslim, Aisha Stacey, also argues in agreement with Hazleton's proposition that doubting one's faith is a natural consequence of the human experience. The difference she points out about Islam, however, is the fact that it is a religion equipped with helping its followers address these doubts. She says, "Islam is often described as 'informed knowledge' rather than blind faith."[48] Therefore, Muslims must continue to strive for knowledge in their faith from the beginning until the very end. There should never be a moment then that a Muslim believes he or she has all the answers. Stacey says, "if one has doubts about the fundamentals of Islam then one should look at the proofs of Islam in greater detail so as to strengthen their faith."[49] Stacey closes by saying, "If a person experiencing doubts feels bad and distressed because of this, then he should not be overly worried or frightened, as Prophet Muhammad said, these thoughts are 'signs of faith'!"[50]

However, not all Islamic interpretations on doubt look as favorably as Hazleton, Shahid, and Stacey on the idea of doubting your faith, asking questions, or practicing critical inquiry. Radical groups certainly exist stemming from Islam, and the West is acutely aware of this in its media and political concerns. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood (strong in Egypt) and the Taliban (strong in Afghanistan), as well as ISIS, persist and continue to perpetuate radicalism.[51] These groups oppose not only Western

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[48] Aisha Stacey, "Dealing with Doubts," New Muslims eLearning Site, accessed August 14, 2017, http://www.newmuslims.com/lessons/175/.
[49] Ibid,.
[50] Ibid,.
[51] Smart, *Worldviews: cross cultural explorations of human beliefs*, 154.

culture, but also any Muslim (Shia or Sunni) who resists their ideals. In fact, it can be argued extensively that the West is merely a bystander in an ongoing conflict within Islam itself.[52] We can see from an argument such as this how impactful the relationship between religious extremism and other cultural groups can be. Islamic extremism has an impact on both other Muslim sects within its borders of influence and on Western religions, in differing cultural contexts.

As scholar of religions Reza Aslan points out, "there will always be groups that will try to use their particular interpretation of religion to promote their own social and political agendas..."[53] Similar to the BBS's desire to return to its past, Islamic extremist groups also wish to return to some previous structure of the Islamic world, but in the way they deem as correct.

What is Interreligious Dialogue?

Practicing critical inquiry is not only a preventative measure to combat these fundamentalist groups stemming from the inability to accept doubt, but it also strengthens the effectiveness and richness of interreligious dialogue in creating supportive relations between religious and cultural groups. Interreligious dialogue is conversation between religious others about their differing religious beliefs at both individual and institutional levels. In his ethnography *Refuge in Crestone: A Sanctuary for Interrelgious Dialogue*, Aaron Thomas Raverty says, "When people speak about getting involved in interreligious dialogue, most assume that it is a pursuit better left to experts, especially those in

[52] Reza Aslan, *No god but God: the origins, evolution, and future of Islam* (New York: Ember, 2012), 276.
[53] Ibid,. 275.

theology."[54] This is a common misconception that Raverty points out. In fact interreligious dialogue takes various forms, "from meetings between religious leaders in a common display of solidarity and friendship to collaboration between members of different religions in grassroots projects, and from intense discussion and debate between religious scholars to interreligious prayer and spiritual exchange."[55] This means that anyone can participate in interreligious dialogue.

It is important to note that there is emphasis on the word *dialogue*. It is not a time for trying to convince the other that your belief is the right or true way. Doing so turns the dialogue into an argument, and it exploits the opportunity to learn from each other by turning it into an outlet for missionary work. When a religion places emphasis on proclamation, therefore, it is incredibly important to recognize that the two are not interchangeable. Marcello Zago makes the distinction by stating "Dialogue is a search for mutual knowledge and enrichment, while proclamation incorporates the idea of a challenge to accept the message."[56] Therefore, if one of the parties engaging in dialogue is going into the dialogue expecting to change the other's mind (in an attempt to gain converts), it can quickly become a debate or an argument. In a book on mediation, the differences between argument and dialogue are laid out in a table (Table 1) that should be examined by anyone struggling to understand the difference between the two.[57]

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[54] Aaron Thomas Raverty, *Refuge in Crestone: A Sanctuary for Interreligious Dialogue* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 11.
[55] Cornille, *The im-possibility of interreligious dialogue*, 1.
[56] Marcello Zago, "The New Millennium and the Emerging Religious Encounters," *Missiology: An International Review* 28, no. 1 (2000): 5-18, doi:10.1177/009182960002800102: 17.
[57] Kathy Domenici and Stephen W. Littlejohn, *Mediation: empowerment in conflict management* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2001), 29.

TABLE 1

Argument And Dialogue

Argument	*Dialogue*
In an argument, we try to win.	In a dialogue, we try to understand.
In arguments, we compete for speaking time.	In dialogues, listening is as important as speaking.
In arguments, we often speak for others.	In dialogues, we speak mostly for ourselves.
In arguments, we bring up the behavior of others.	In dialogues, we speak from personal experience.
The atmosphere of an argument is often threatening and uncomfortable.	The atmosphere of a dialogue is one of safety.
In arguments, we tend to take sides with others.	In dialogues, we discover differences even among those with whom we agree.
In arguments, we polarize ourselves from those with whom we disagree.	In dialogues, we discover shared concerns between ourselves and others.
In arguments, we feel unswerving commitment to a point of view.	In dialogues, we discover our uncertainties as well as deeply held beliefs.
In arguments, questions are asked to make a point or put the other person down.	In dialogues, questions are asked out of true curiosity and the desire to know more.
In arguments, statements are predictable.	In dialogues, we discover significant new information and insights.
In arguments, our statements tend to be simplistic.	In dialogues, we explore the complexity of the issues being discussed.
Arguments tend to be competitive.	Dialogues tend to be collaborative.

Adapted from the Public Conversations Project

These distinctions are important to make and they act as continual reminders of the goals that should be present in a dialogue in order to avoid an argument from ensuing. It is easy to see where the lines can quickly become crossed in religious discussions where each

party feels strongly about their beliefs. Thus, tables such as Table 1 are essential reminders to the differences between argument and dialogue.

Many people new to the notion of interreligious dialogue can find it hard to conceptualize a meeting of religions without those attempts to convert and change others' minds. In her book *The im-Possibility of Interreligious Dialogue*, Catherine Cornille does not shy away from the hard fact that interreligious dialogue is a challenge for all religions. While dialogue is certainly a movement toward understanding and tolerance among religious others, it also encourages an openness to learn something from the religious other, thus making dialogue part of a "continuous religious pursuit of truth."[58] The practice of critical inquiry and doubt cultivates and prepares individuals for this kind of dialogue. It is challenging for religions for this very reason. Remaining open-minded while trusting in your belief system is a constant balancing act. However, with critical inquiry, the questioning mind will be able to learn from other religious traditions, which can shape one's faith for the better.

Cornille lays out five important conditions for fruitful dialogue between religions in her book. They are: doctrinal or epistemic humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy, and hospitality.[59] Humility is perhaps the most important in regard to critical inquiry. As described by Cornille, humility involves the "recognition of the limitation of one's knowledge and understanding of the other."[60] It does not stop there, however. Humility not only recognizes the limitations you have understanding the other, but it also includes recognizing the limitations you have in knowledge of your own faith. As

[58] Cornille, *The im-possibility of interreligious dialogue*, 3.
[59] Ibid,. 4-6.
[60] Ibid,. 10.

Cornille states, “Openness and receptivity toward the truth of the other religion presupposes humble recognition of the constant limitation and therefore endless perfectibility of one’s own religious understanding of the truth.”[61] In the end, the ultimate truth is beyond words, comprehension, and certainty. Spiritual humility serves as a reminder to avoid pride in one’s own tradition. She says, “Since the ultimate truth is beyond our grasp, all doctrinal categories are to be regarded as at best approximate reflections of that truth. Hence, humility must also entail a certain abandonment of all preconceived knowledge of God and of all theological or doctrinal pride.”[62]

Although this certain abandonment is necessary to humility, commitment to one’s own tradition is integral to fruitful dialogue as well. This is indeed a challenge, but is important for any religious individual that wishes to flourish in his/her faith through interactions with others. Cornille claims that this commitment “provides for individuals engaged in dialogue a solid point of departure and a critical place of return.”[63] Failure to find the balance between humility and commitment creates the opportunity for dialogue to quickly become argument. Cornille points out that “while religious traditions may overtly support and even encourage dialogue, they are generally less than receptive to the new insights arising from dialogue, especially when these might challenge established ways of thinking or acting.”[64] However, this is precisely why dialogue is so very, very important. The need for humility in dialogue is fostered through critical inquiry and then pairs with commitment in a love match that is able to conquer this fear of change that arises from new insights.

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[61] Ibid,. 10.
[62] Ibid,. 26.
[63] Ibid,. 60.
[64] Ibid,. 82.

The third condition that Cornille describes is interconnection. Interconnection is the ability to find a common ground between the traditions. In a globalized world with many religious claims from various traditions, it may not seem as if there could possibly be sufficient common ground for continual dialogue amongst the variety of religious sects. When considering the fact that each religion also claims uniqueness, finding a shared belief or goal might seem like a fantasy, an ideal. However, differing religions can in fact find many common spaces and shared ideas because dialogue does not have to begin by examining specific dogma, as is often assumed, but can begin instead through shared social, economic, or political challenges such as "secularization, world peace, human suffering, or the damages visited upon the environment."[65] When religious others are able to dialogue about their common goals or struggles, it opens the door for learning from others how each individual from the different traditions tackles and approaches the particular issue. After all, dialogue would not be desirable if not for the realization that traditions outside of one's own can have relatable conceptions of the ultimate truth. Through this interconnection the learning can truly begin. As Cornille says, "Dialogue is a process through which one both discovers and reconfirms the interconnection with the teachings of other religious traditions and continues to deepen one's own self-understanding through a progressive, though not unlimited, integration of the truth of other religions."[66]

Following interconnection is empathy. Although the data collected from various religious teachings, stories, and Holy Scriptures has been translated, taught, and studied, simply knowing about the religious other does not equate to a genuine understanding of

[65] Ibid,. 96.
[66] Ibid,. 135.

how that tradition is lived out on a daily basis. While religion is recognizably more than a feeling, a great deal is lost in interreligious dialogue if empathy is not practiced alongside it. Empathy allows for a richer, fuller grasp of the meaning of particular beliefs when able to get into the mind-set of the religious other. Trying to understand the experience of the religious other creates room for growth and deeper appreciation for one's own tradition. Cornille recognizes that "Even though one's own religious life and experience always remains the basis for empathic understanding of the religious other, empathy may still lead to an expansion of one's religious horizon and to a discovery of religious feelings and experiences hitherto unimagined. These experiences may then become the basis for an enrichment of one's own religious tradition."[67]

Lastly, Cornille acknowledges hospitality as a necessary component for fruitful dialogue. While hospitality is in its general sense seen as welcoming another despite differences, hospitality practiced within interreligious dialogue goes a step further as "an attitude of openness and receptivity to those very differences as a possible source of truth."[68] This open-minded hospitality recognizes the potential for learning from the other, which is essential for maintaining a dialogue rather than creating an argument. It acknowledges that there is potential for one's own faith to be positively transformed by the experience of the religious other.

With all of these conditions being deemed necessary in order to have fruitful dialogue, Cornille admits that it is very easy to conclude that true interreligious dialogue is in fact impossible. The conditions require that critical inquiry be practiced at its most arduous form, and as such most religions have a suspicion, as well as hesitancy,

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[67] Ibid,. 176.
[68] Ibid,. 177.

surrounding the practice of dialogue. She says, “There is still a widespread perception within most religious traditions that dialogue is an extraneous activity that does not derive from or touch upon their own self-understanding.”[69] This attitude blocks the gateway for religions to learn from each other and develop. Without practicing interreligious dialogue it is arguably harder to gain new knowledge from religious others. Cornille closes by saying, “Rather than a matter of possibility or impossibility, the capacity for dialogue is thus itself a process, involving, indeed calling for, continuous critical self-examination and a creative retrieval of resources that may open the tradition to the religious other and to growth in the truth.”[70]

Despite its obvious challenges, practicing interreligious dialogue is increasing as globalism pushes the boundaries and exposes a rich and diverse array of religious traditions. Religious pluralism leads to interactions both positive and negative and teaching the differences between argument and dialogue is necessary in moving toward healthy relationships among religious others, rather than a clash of civilizations. Interreligious dialogue allows for these healthy relationships to form because as Zago points out, it “presupposes mutual respect and cooperation.”[71] Dialogue is also motivated by both anthropology and theology. The outcomes of religious dialogue impact communities— those that interact within the same community as well as different communities interacting abroad. Therefore, Zago also points out that “respect for religions and dialogue with their adherents takes on an exceptional importance for

[69] Ibid,. 213.
[70] Ibid,. 216.
[71] Zago, "The New Millennium and the Emerging Religious Encounters," 1.

persons who have to live together in a globalized and pluralist world."[72] As people of differing backgrounds begin to more frequently share the same community, critical inquiry is a necessary practice to ensure that respect for others.

Interreligious dialogue also necessitates critical inquiry in that it calls for, as Cornille says, a "continuous critical self-examination and a creative retrieval of resources that may open the tradition to the religious other and to growth in the truth."[73] Religions, such as Christianity, that have a history of failing to live up to this aspect of interreligious dialogue must work exceptionally hard to acknowledge their historical faults and move toward a more self-critical approach.

Christianity's "Monopoly on Salvation"

Christianity and its relationship to dialogue have a complex history that relates back to doubt versus truth claims. Maintaining a balance between being truthful to your faith while also upholding a sense of openness to having your faith challenged during interreligious dialogue is difficult. However, Christianity has a history of claiming it is the only way to salvation, a damaging claim for entering into dialogue hoping for fruitful discussion rather than argument or attempts at conversion. In her book *Monopoly on Salvation: A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism*, Jeannine Hill Fletcher expands on this history and argues that Christians who claim Christianity is the only way to salvation are in fact limiting the power and mystery of God. The lack of critical inquiry practiced by Christians who believe Christianity is the only way to salvation leads to argument, rather than effective dialogue.

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[72] Ibid,. 13.
[73] Cornille, *The im-possibility of interreligious dialogue*, 216.

The main affirmation held by the Christian faith, which has proved complicated for entering into positive dialogue, is the affirmation held about Jesus Christ as being the only way to reach salvation. Jesus holds a unique position in Christianity because it is believed that God is known in and through Jesus Christ. We see this in 1 Timothy 2:5-6 and John 14:6-7 of the Bible.[74] In both Christianity's distant and recent past, it has lacked in its efforts to embrace encounters with other faiths as well as progressing in new ways of understanding God. However, as Fletcher points out, "The flow of history in affirming God's revelation in Jesus Christ and salvation as part of that revelation has tended to emphasize affirmation over incomprehensibility, precisely when Christians consider 'salvation' and the fate of persons of other faiths."[75]

With the affirmation of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation, little could be said in the early history of Christianity about the fate of religious others besides that they would simply not be saved. For example, the 1442 Council of Florence said the following:

> "[The Holy Roman Church] firmly believes, professes and teaches that none of those who exist outside of the Catholic Church—neither pagans nor Jews nor heretics nor schismatics—can become sharers of eternal life; rather they will go into the eternal fire 'which was prepared for the devil and his angels,' (Matthew 25:42)."[76]

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[74] "For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all," (1 Tim 2:5-6). "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father,'" (John 14:6-7).
[75] Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *Monopoly on salvation?: a feminist approach to religious pluralism* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 20.
[76] Ibid, 32.

Such was the initial stance. Then as colonial expansion arrived in the 15th and 16th centuries, the affirmation that Jesus was the sole path to salvation expanded to include all sects of Christianity, thus it was not limited to only Catholics being considered saved. Anyone who had the opportunity and did not conform or convert to Christianity was seen as condemned.[77] This exclusivist point of view is predominant in much of Christianity's history, but as Fletcher points out, "in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, increasingly Christians have reconsidered such an exclusivist point of view."[78]

Theologians have thus begun to explore new ways of constructing theologies of religious pluralism that is more inclusive toward religious others. While this turn in events is a step in the right direction, it is clear that not all Christians are on board with moving away from exclusivism. It can even be difficult for Christians who are aware of exclusivist theology's negative effects to rid this tendency from their thought process because it is so engrained into the tradition.[79] Even in documents that are not exclusivist, the tone of exclusivism is found strewn throughout. Take for example the document *Dominus Iesus*. Fletcher explains that "The document stands firmly by the affirmation that the 'fullness of salvation' is found in the Catholic Church, while other persons are 'in a gravely deficient situation'—'objectively speaking'…Exclusivist patterns claim a 'God's-eye view' that serves as a basis for making 'objective' judgments about the negative status of persons of other faiths."[80] And as Cornille also acknowledges, "the Vatican Document Dominus Iesus…states that 'it cannot be overlooked that the other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions and other errors constitute an obstacle to

[77] Ibid,. 33.
[78] Ibid,. 52.
[79] Ibid,. 54.
[80] Ibid,. 55.

salvation.' Other religions are thus regarded as merely partially or provisionally true."[81] Here Cornille acknowledges a section that contains exclusivist attitudes toward the traditions of other faiths, claiming that these rituals still are not satisfactory for achieving salvation.

Despite the exclusivist attitudes, inclusivism does exist among Christians. Inclusivists are constantly balancing their belief that Jesus is the mediator to salvation while also recognizing that God desires the salvation of all people, regardless of a person's belief in Jesus Christ. Inclusivism pulls from 1 Timothy, which says "[God our Savior] desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus…"[82] Inclusivists believe that Jesus is the conceptual reality of the universe, so therefore all good and right thinking is always Christ, even when people don't know it. Thus the belief is that everyone finds their way to God, and this must be through Jesus, but they don't know it is through Jesus. People find their way and move toward Christ— they just don't realize that they are moving toward Christ. However this kind of balance of ideas does not address the effect it has when actually practiced. Taking this kind of attitude toward the religious other may seem at first to be the perfect solution, but even inclusivism has its drawbacks. For instance, Karl Rahner's idea of the anonymous Christian (which states that people can live the life of a Christian without knowing of Christianity and still be saved) still judges the characteristics of religious others through Christianity.

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[81] Cornille, *The im-possibility of interreligious dialogue*, 193.
[82] Senior, Collins, and Getty-Sullivan, *The Catholic study Bible the New American Bible*, 1 Tim 2:4-5.

Pluralism is another theology of religions found amongst Christians. A Christian pluralist views Jesus Christ as the moral ideal and seeks sameness across religious beliefs. Pluralists appreciate and value the connections that are made from commonalities between religions, but it is arguably more challenging to see where pluralists appreciate and connect in spite of the differences.[83] In this sense, Fletcher points out "the pluralist construction does not really allow for the distinctiveness of other faiths."[84] The stress placed on commonalities leaves little room for the exploration of the differences. This outlook therefore does not allow for the opportunity to learn from other religions because of their differences, and rather focuses on the sameness across traditions. This does not allow for more critical discoveries that help one another to grow in their faiths. Exclusivists, inclusivists, and pluralists are in a sense all looking for some sense of sameness among religions. As Fletcher says, "Exclusivism so clearly expects this sameness that it rejects outright the differences of other religions. Inclusivism uses this sameness as the basis for seeking 'Christ' within other traditions; and pluralism similarly seeks sameness, although not explicitly identifying 'Christ' as the source of sameness."[85]

Exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism all remain problematic stances for approaching religious others. As Fletcher writes, "The exclusivist stance is problematic in its outright rejection of other religions because of their difference. The inclusivist stance of the 'anonymous Christian' is problematic in that people of diverse faiths are judged on the basis of Christian characteristics, and thus they are unavoidably seen as deficient in

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[83] Fletcher, *Monopoly on salvation?: a feminist approach to religious pluralism,* 65.
[84] Ibid,. 65.
[85] Ibid,. 66.

comparison to explicit Christians. The pluralist stance similarly cannot account for the distinctiveness of diverse traditions as positive characteristics."[86]

A more appropriate goal would be to simply focus on having conversation, rather than attempting to find similarities at every turn. Fletcher puts the beautiful truth of dialogue into words when she says the following:

> "The encounter with the 'other' is neither one of total sameness nor unbridgeable difference, but the encounter and exchange is quite unpredictable. The preconceptions of what 'Buddhist thought' or 'Christian doctrine' means are shattered by actual conversations between particular Buddhists and particular Christians whose own understanding and interpretations of the thought and doctrine of their tradition varies widely. As a creative exchange, one never knows quite where the conversation will lead as conversation partners dance between sameness and difference, at times seeing clearly and recognizing conceptual agreement, at other times speaking past one another and not fully understanding the other's perspective."[87]

The relationships that are formed because of this critical approach to dialogue and healthy attempts to understand one another are integral to creating more peaceful relations across religious communities. Applying critical inquiry to the dialogue allows us to understand it in terms such as those so eloquently framed above by Fletcher. This in turn has the potential to positively impact the actual relationships between religious others, creating a more peacefully functioning society.

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[86] Ibid,. 66.
[87] Ibid,. 95.

Buddhist-Christian Relations

Understanding the framework of the Christian history of monopolization of salvation lays a basis of comprehending Christianity's relationships with other religions. As John Makransky points out in his work on the comparison between Christian and Buddhist liberation theologies, "Historically, both Christians and Buddhists have viewed their own traditions as lacking nothing essential, certainly not needing any fundamental correction by another religious tradition."[88] So while it may seem at first thought that Buddhist and Christian relations must not be able to find points of similarity to even begin a comprehensive dialogue, there are in fact many parallels and important ideas to be shared from both sides that without critical inquiry would go ignored.

One such parallel is between Buddha and Jesus. Both Buddha and Jesus "directly challenged their audience to open their eyes and hearts."[89] Both direct their followers' attention to the need to practice compassion, and in both traditions there are wisdoms and sayings that can teach the other even more about their own faith. In addition, while Buddhist meditation and Christian prayer are extremely different, the practice of meditation can be extremely helpful to Christians in their faith. Relations can also be compared when discussing what happens after death. The concept of nirvana in Buddhism contrasts from the Christian belief in heaven.[90] Christianity does not know

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[88] John Makransky, "A Buddhist Critique Of, and Learning From, Christian Liberation Theology," *Theological Studies* 75, no. 3 (2014): 635-57, doi:10.1177/0040563914541028: 635-636.
[89] Feldmeier, *Encounters in faith: Christianity in interreligious dialogue*, 151.
[90] Nirvana is the Buddhist end goal: to reach a state without suffering or sense of self. It breaks the cycle of rebirth and karma.

much about heaven, and its teachings are inconsistent. Therefore, Buddhist wisdom can teach Christians not to "overplay one's hand."[91]

Both traditions also share a similar "vow" to help others achieve salvation. In the Theravada Buddhist tradition, the bodhisattva vow is undertaken by a bodhisattva vowing to withhold attaining nirvana until he can develop to the point of becoming a future Buddha for the overall good.[92] The Mahayana Buddhist tradition also has a bodhisattva vow to hold off on attaining nirvana until he has helped everyone else to achieve this goal.[93] In the Christian tradition, this is what Jesus performed in his suffering to seek salvation for all others by death on the cross. As Feldmeier points out in his book, this bodhisattva vow "represents exactly what Christ wants of his disciples."[94] Thus, both traditions share a sense of religious duty to withhold attaining salvation until they can help others on the path toward this goal.

Paul Knitter's book *Without Buddha I could not be a Christian* explores the relationship between the faiths and how his exposure to Buddhism has developed his faith as a Christian. He draws on Jeannine Hill Fletcher's theory of hybrid identity in his conclusion, in response to the issue of whether or not he can still be considered a Christian after having understood his faith anew in light of his understandings of Buddhist teaching.[95] Knitter says, "My core identity as a Christian has been profoundly influenced by my passing over to Buddhism…There have been many instances in this

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[91] Feldmeier, *Encounters in faith: Christianity in interreligious dialogue*, 159.
[92] A Bodhisattva is someone who is far along on the path to reaching nirvana but has not yet reached the end where one attains perfect enlightenment.
[93] Feldmeier, *Encounters in faith: Christianity in interreligious dialogue*, 164.
[94] Ibid,. 166.
[95] Fletcher's idea of hybridity states that a human's religious identity is in fact a hybrid, one that forms and changes as exposure to other ideas shape an ongoing understanding of one's own religious identity.

book where I have recognized, often with great relief, that Buddhism can offer us Christians a deeper insight, a clearer truth."[96] This kind of an approach to Buddhist-Christian relations displays Christian effort to remain open-minded to the ways in which another faith can shed light on one's own, without feeling the need to compete.

Not all reactions to this kind of relation see it as a positive, however. In James Heisig's work on Christian-Buddhist dialogue, he says the following about Knitter's book:

> "Given the content of the book, the conclusion is academically irresponsible, but it typifies the kind of emotional reaction that the word *praxis* elicits among those in the Christian establishment obsessed with the rational defense of orthodoxy. Despite Knitter's attempts over more than twenty years to shift the focus of interreligious dialogue over to praxis, his ideas have constantly been dragged back into the debate over orthodoxy. Part of the reason is that Knitter himself has used his approach as a critique of orthodoxy, without which orthopraxis cannot get a foothold in theology. Buddhist praxis comes at praxis from a different perspective, one that does not get stalled in defending truth claims."[97]

Heisig's work on Christian-Buddhist dialogue also points out that in the beginnings of dialogue, it was made clear to the Buddhists that the Christians were much more interested in discussion amongst themselves, and not in dialogue with Buddhists. Then during the 20th century it seemed as though there was the potential for a dismantling of Christian cultural biases, but the dialogue itself, Heisig argues, has yet to be

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[96] Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I could not be a Christian* (Richmond: Oneworld, 2013), 215.
[97] Catherine Cornille, ed., *Interreligious dialogue and cultural change* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books, 2012), 112.

considered fruitful.[98] He says, "It will not do to lay too much blame on theology, but as Joseph O'Leary has stated, 'Theology of religions since Rahner's time has continued to theorize about the religions with little effort to become directly acquainted with them, as if the religions posed a threat to the neatness and completeness of the theologian's metaphysical system.'"[99] Dialogue then can often be seen as not a Buddhist-Christian dialogue, but a "Christian Buddhist-Christian dialogue."[100] This, of course, is an impression that ought to be remedied.

One example of positive dialogue between Christians and Buddhists is through the Monastic Inter-religious Dialogue, or MID.[101] Buddhist monks met with Catholic monks at the St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, MN in 2006 with the organizational help of MID to participate in interreligious dialogue surrounding the tradition of celibacy in both faiths. Father William Skudlarek produced a book after these dialogues titled *Demythologizing Celibacy: Practical Wisdom from Christian and Buddhist Monasticism* and Buddhist monk Reverend Kusala has an online source of some of these dialogues as well.[102] Dialogues such as this would not be possible without the reinforcement of critical inquiry and the desire to better relationships.

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[98] Ibid,. 101.
[99] Ibid,. 101.
[100] Ibid,. 105.
[101] MID is "a Roman Catholic organization of women and men religious from the western monastic tradition. It is dedicated to fostering dialogue with the monastic traditions of other religions," (Definition taken from http://monasticinterreligiousdialogue.com).
[102] Buddhist-Catholic Dialogue, accessed April 20, 2018, https://www.urbandharma.org/buca/index.html.

Image is taken from https://www.urbandharma.org/buca/index.html.

Muslim-Christian Relations

Unlike Buddhism and Christianity, Islam and Christianity share the commonality of being Abrahamic religions (the third being Judaism). Since the beginning of Islam in the 7th century there has been contact and interaction with both Christians and Jews. The historic relationship between Christians and Muslims proves to be complex and their interactions have included both times of tolerance and times of war, such as the Crusades, for instance. When it comes to their history of dialogue, and given that Christianity and Islam are both People of the Book, they share common roots and points of connection that have the potential to enhance the relationship between the two. It goes without saying, however, that Islam and Christianity share an abundance of differences. Many terms and concepts cross between the two faiths and as such dialogue between the two must be in constant communication as to what each faith means when it uses those terms

and concepts in discussion. Shared terms might include "faith, revelation, prophets, law, sacred books, freedom, human rights, ethics, and salvation," to name a few.[103]

Muslim-Christian relations have continuously been depicted as a fundamental clash. This supposed clash between the Western culture and the religion of Islam is further perpetuated through media. The majority of media representation of Muslims in the West is negative, and through such representation, the relationship between the everyday Christian and the everyday Muslim continues to be strained. Author Jane Smith says, "Right-wing evangelical rhetoric in the United States against Islam has been fueled by incidents of international terrorism involving Muslims, while the well-funded Islamophobia industry in the United States has been producing and distributing large amounts of anti-Muslim material…at an estimated worth of more than 40 million dollars each year."[104] It is important to note, however, that a majority of Americans contend that Muslims face a lot of discrimination in the West, and "roughly half of US adults say media coverage of Muslims is unfair."[105] This, certainly, is a step in the right direction.

To keep those numbers rising and increase a better understanding of the nature of Islam, multiple efforts are in place to keep the dialogue flowing on individual scales. For example, the Islamic Center of Minnesota hosts a space for interreligious dialogue each month focusing on issues such as the oneness of God and the differences between the

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[103] Maurice Borrmans, *Guidelines for dialogue between Christians and Muslims* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 3.

[104] Jane Smith, "Muslim-Christian Relations: Historical and Contemporary Realities," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, June 08, 2017, accessed April 27, 2018, http://religion.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-11.

[105] Shannon Greenwood, "7. How the U.S. general public views Muslims and Islam," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, July 25, 2017, accessed August 12, 2017, http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/how-the-u-s-general-public-views-muslims-and-islam/.

way Jesus is presented in the Qur'an and in the Bible.[106] Other examples include the program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa, or PROCMURA. This particular organization works to ease the tensions that have surfaced in Nigeria by creating opportunities for engagement between mosques and churches.[107] Pope Francis has also played a positive role in encouraging dialogue between Christian and Muslim leaders in order to change the perspective of viewing each other as enemies to viewing each other as sisters and brothers.[108] The World Council of Churches also promotes these interactions. In recent years there has also been an increase in Muslim organizations promoting dialogue as well, including the Islamic Society of North America, the Islamic Council of North America, the Muslim American Society, and the Muslim Political Action Committee.[109] Students from the University of Wollongong in Dubai organized another encouraging example of positive dialogue. Both Muslim and Christian students organized a coming together for dialogue in the spring of 2005. According to their website, "people's life trajectories were changed that day. One student decided to become a Muslim apologist. Others set out into Christian ministry. Many others learned to dialogue peacefully that day and are still in conversation with their friends of different faiths."[110] Interactions such as these foster better communication and understanding across people of different faiths.

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[106] You can find Islamic Center of Minnesota hosted events on their homepage using the following URL: www.islamiccentermn.org.
[107] Smith, "Muslim-Christian Relations: Historical and Contemporary Realities."
[108] Ibid.,
[109] Ibid.,
[110] "Muslim Christian Dialogue: The History," Muslim Christian Dialogue, accessed April 27, 2018, http://www.muslimchristiandialogue.org/about/.

Of course the discussion between Christians and Muslims is especially important because of each religion's massive population of followers. Religious beliefs play a major role in the life of politics in the West despite the separation of church and state, and in many other countries religion is integral to political policy. Majority Christian attitudes in the West impact the political sphere, and therefore affects relations among Muslim-majority countries that outwardly advocate for and practice the integration of their own religious beliefs with policy-making. A Christian understanding of Muslim faith is central to fostering peace relations not only abroad but also within the United States.

One such effort to produce helpful resources for Christians in relation with Muslims was prepared on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Titled *Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, it lays some groundwork for understanding the Muslim faith and how Christianity relates to these beliefs. Being written from a Christian perspective it contains noticeable Christian traits, especially in its theme of solidarity and the importance not to ignore these differences. In its conclusion it says:

> "Christian-Muslim dialogue should be seen as one of the principal dimensions of life for men and women of faith in those many countries where believers in the two religions live, work, love, suffer and die together. No doubt many Christians in such circumstances choose to be indifferent, leaving the two communities to their respective customs, prejudices and integrity. However history has shown that such an attitude keeps each party involved in ignorance of the other and encourages all the more misunderstanding, suspicion and conflict."[111]

[111] Borrmans, *Guidelines for dialogue between Christians and Muslims,* 112.

This conclusion perfectly frames the positive relationship between dialogue supported by critical inquiry with others and the bond, or rapport, which is created within society as a result. However, it is clear that there is still much room for improvement between Christian-Muslim relations, but it is uplifting to know that an effort is being made. The outreach, however, has yet to be improved. Where there is effort among leaders of such faiths, there is lack of effort among the followers. It is disheartening to see many Christians in ignorance of what the Muslim faith truly believes, teaches, and lives. While relations can be improved by dialogue among its leaders, it needs to continue to be tackled on a larger scale among individual communities as well.

How Dialogue impacts Culture—Religious and cultural inclusivity in society

As has been shown in the relationships between Christians and Buddhists and Christians and Muslims, religious interactions that come out of critical, thoughtful dialogue are incredibly influential within the religious sphere and on a religious level. However, these dialogues also impact communities and societies as a whole on a cultural level. These religious interactions bring about not only theological beliefs but also cultural changes because religion is itself culturally integrated. For instance, this is why Islam in Turkey looks very different from Islam in Saudi Arabia. Cultural differences between the countries impact religious practice and belief in each place. Since this kind of interreligious dialogue has so much influence in both religious and cultural spheres, it is easy to see where interactions that do not include the practice of critical inquiry can create much larger issues than were perhaps present before. Anthropologists, for example, approach other cultures in this spirit of openness, engagement, and reflexivity.

Religious exchange is a form of cultural exchange and this requires a person to understand that their own position has been deeply shaped by their context, beliefs, and practices. Raising awareness of this fact can be challenging. This is because religion is important to people and therefore people may not be willing to examine how their own contexts and cultural practices shaped a religion they believe in so strongly. Saying that religion is important to people is an obvious statement to make, but one that is important to dissect nonetheless.

We must ask ourselves when it comes to the impact of religious interactions on culture and society: "What is it about religion that makes it such an important part of the fabric of society?"[112] Religion is not only a way of life, but more importantly it is a source of identity. When people believe their identity is threatened by— or in competition with— another identity, it can have disastrous impacts within and across cultures and societies. One of the problems arises from the fact that everyone has a different definition of the concept of religion, and no one shares one same understanding of how God should be comprehended. People also disagree on how central religion should be in our lives and share different theological beliefs even within the same understanding of what the term 'religion' entails.

When it occurs that the basis for one's identity is so rooted in religion, religiously pluralistic societies become broken up into an 'us versus them' mentality.[113] Here is where critical inquiry will play its most vital role. When someone is able to take a step

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[112] *Sociology of Religion*. 2007, accessed February 9, 2018, https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=106232&xtid=115848.

[113] I would like to acknowledge here that I am referencing fundamentalists, who, when given the right political and social settings, have the potential to be extremely harmful both physically and emotionally toward people they believe to be "other."

back and ask questions, and remain open-minded, he/she will be able to understand someone else's story, as understood through their own religious experiences (or lack thereof).[114] This changes the mentality from 'us versus them' to 'us together.' Listening to other people's stories and making personal connections among individuals is integral to creating a society in which religions and the cultures from which they originate can be respected. As Hans Küng once said, "There can be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions" and "there can be no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions."[115]

In the edited volume by Catherine Cornille, *Interreligious Dialogue and Cultural Change*, Peter Phan argues, "interreligious dialogue is unavoidably intercultural dialogue and vice versa."[116] Fletcher acknowledges this in her work as well when she says that we must "recognize that hearing the insights of the religious other always takes place in a complex nexus of personal, social, political, *and* religious contexts where listening to the other does not have only religious consequences but social, political, and personal ones as well."[117] Given a long history of observations such as this, it is critical to recognize the effects of interreligious dialogue in the cultural sphere, as it is pointed out that interreligious dialogue has an impact on multiple facets of life.

Take for instance the sudden popular growth of some symbols and concepts from Zen Buddhism in American culture. We see words such as "nirvana" and "karma"

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[114] I would like to acknowledge here that atheists, "nones," and the unaffiliated are not exempt from conversation and learning about religious others. Atheists and others play just as big of a role in the dialogue, due to the unavoidable fact that religion entwines with every sphere of life.
[115] Cornille, *The im-possibility of interreligious dialogue*, 104.
[116] Cornille, *Interreligious dialogue and cultural change*, 2.
[117] Fletcher, *Monopoly on salvation?: a feminist approach to religious pluralism*, 21.

trending on American clothing. The mandala is put onto tapestries that are popular among college students. Small Buddha statues, or just the Buddha's head, are designer trinkets for Americans to display. While it is true that many users of such popularized American products have an understanding of, and respect for, the meaning behind the words and symbols, it raises the issue of whether or not religious symbols or beliefs should be made into cultural trends. A quote from Phan's work says, "Even though not all Buddhists approve of the changes that have taken place in secularized Buddhism, it has resonated with American audiences and has left its own mark on American culture."[118] Here we see a prime example of how religious conversation has direct impacts on culture and vice versa.

The Catholic Church specifically addressed culture during Vatican II under the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World in a section "Proper Development in Culture." While it briefly admits the possibility of the church to be "enriched" by its interactions with other cultures, Cornille points out "Vatican II's overriding interest is in how the church can shape and enrich cultures." [119] It is incredibly important to note that without the various influences of a large spectrum of cultures, Christianity itself would not even exist. Take for example, the influences of Greek and

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[118] Cornille, *Interreligious dialogue and cultural change*, 8.

[119] Ibid,. 25. The passage from Proper Development in Culture says the following: "The good news of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen humanity; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. It takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation and enriches them with heavenly resources, causes them to bear fruit, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes and restores them in Christ. In this way the church carries out its mission and in this act it stimulates and advances human and civil culture, as well as contributing by its activity, including liturgical activity, to humanity's interior freedom. (no. 58)"

Indian philosophies, or the structure of government in the Roman Empire.[120] Phan writes that culture has had an impact on the creed, code, cult, community, spirituality, and arts of Christianity, so while Christianity has its abhorrent history of colonialism and imposing missionary work, it has also been affected by the cultures it has impacted.[121]

Perhaps one of the better examples of Christian missionary work that was not imposing or forceful was the work done by Roberto de Nobili in India.[122] Realizing that his mission to gain converts would not be successful if he continued to reject the people's customs, he "set out to adapt himself to the cultural form of the native people, arguing, 'The herald of the Gospel must himself, as far as possible, conform his way of acting to the social customs of these people.'"[123] This approach was in stark contrast to the history of other Christian missionaries, including Francis Xavier, whose approach—while not including force through the use of an army— preferred "the destruction of native religious forms in order to clear the space for Christianity."[124] Of course de Nobili still had his faults and was still a product of his time. It is clear through his letters and documentation of his time in India that de Nobili fell short of listening to his religious counterparts, especially when given counter-affirmations about God. His response to those challenges continued to follow the history of Christianity's monopoly on salvation, disregarding the other culture's teachings on God, and therefore missing out on other ways of understanding. In many ways, this approach can be considered harmful because he found a clever way to influence others in a way that was perhaps only the guise of

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[120] Ibid,. 29.
[121] Ibid,. 29.
[122] Roberto de Nobili lived from 1577-1656, arriving in India the year 1605.
[123] Fletcher, *Monopoly on salvation?: a feminist approach to religious pluralism*, 39.
[124] Ibid,. 38. Francis Xavier lived from 1506-1552.

cultural openness, when in reality it could have been simply a more effective approach to accomplishing his goal of conversion. Nonetheless, de Nobili paved one way for Christians to witness a different way of interacting with cultural others.

Following in de Nobili's footsteps, Matteo Ricci studied in China while respecting and adopting aspects of cultural life there in order to build connections.[125] His work focused less on the effort to gain converts, and more on his discoveries of the commonalities between his Christian identity and that of Confucianism. Both de Nobili and Ricci demonstrated that "fruitful conversation may not arise from merely chance encounters with neighbors of other faiths, but from shared lifestyles and daily encounters," a sentiment that rings true for modern attempts at understanding those in the community that have cultural and religious differences from one's own.[126]

Coming out of de Nobili and Ricci, however, was the destruction of other people's culture through colonialism. During the period of colonialism, missionaries sought to change not only the other's religion but also their culture. Specifically looking at colonialism in Africa, African societal practices that went against Christian teachings (polygamy for example) were deconstructed by missionaries, leaving communities trying to salvage what was left of their crumbling societal practices (for example, leaving many women in the community without "financial or social support").[127] Religious interaction here therefore had a direct effect on culture in various African countries. Fletcher states in her work: "Breaking ties with their families and cultural forms, converts were baptized with Western names and converted their style of dress to that of the Western

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[125] Matteo Ricci lived from 1552-1610, arriving in China the year 1583.
[126] Fletcher, *Monopoly on salvation?: a feminist approach to religious pluralism*, 44-45.
[127] Ibid,. 46.

missionaries. The definition of what was 'Christian' became conflated with specific European cultural forms." [128] The effects of colonialism still play a very present role in religious and cultural interactions today and should not be ignored or unacknowledged as they so often are. Not only are the effects of colonialism requiring more immediate attention, but so too is the perpetuation of fundamentalism throughout religions.

In today's political climate, fundamentalism throughout religions is unfortunately all too easy to blatantly see in politics, causing negative affects on the societal perceptions of others. Politicians have a voice that influences people across the country, and whether or not a politician encourages violence against other groups of people or not, messages of hate or intolerance are distinguishable. Attitudes such as these lead to hate crimes, something people in the West claim they have seen an increase in since the election of President Trump. As Fletcher says in her book, "It is an exclusivist attitude that underlies many of the religious hate crimes witnessed even in the last fifteen years in America and abroad. Keep in mind that an exclusivist stance alone does not lead to destructive actions; however, an exclusivist attitude can encourage the antagonism at the root of these offenses."[129]

As Americans report a higher rate in religious hate crimes, it is interesting to look at the religious voting statistics and trends for the election. Evangelicals played a large role in the election of President Trump. "Christians who described themselves as evangelical and born-again gave Trump 81 percent of their votes,"[130] and according to Robert R. Jones, CEO of PRRI, "White evangelicals in this election aren't values voters.

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[128] Ibid,. 46.
[129] Ibid,. 55.
[130] Anonymous, "Catholic Voters Choose Donald Trump," *National Catholic Reporter; Kansas City*.

They're nostalgia voters. Trump's line- 'Let's make America great again'- and his last minute saying – 'look, folks, I'm your last chance'- was really powerful for white evangelicals who see their numbers in the general population slipping."[131]

Comparing this attitude to that of fundamentalist groups in Islam and Buddhism, there is a key theme throughout for the need to fight for a return to the way things "used to be" and the way that they believe it "should be."[132] This has led to a vocalization from Neo-Nazis in the West, including white supremacists marching in a newly emboldened state following the election of a President who spewed provocative messages concerning other groups such as Mexicans and Muslims. This conflict can be seen as one deriving from fear and lack of exposure to other religions and other cultures. Fletcher says it best when she says, "On the negative side, conflicts we experience locally and globally often seem to arise from different descriptions of 'the way things are' and 'the way things ought to be.' These conflicts are often deeply rooted because they are founded on the understanding of reality structured by a given cultural community."[133] Examples such as

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[131] Ibid,.

[132] Often these ideas seem to be paired with a radical sense of nationalism, especially as we saw in the example of the BBS. This relationship is complicated to say the least. As Aslan is quoted saying that there will always be people that use religions as a means to push their own political and social agendas, so too does the UN recognize the complicated relationship between the senses of superiority in one's country, and the use of religions to impose power. An overwhelming majority of countries in this assembly agreed that it was not the religions themselves causing conflict, but "the pursuit of narrow and political objectives by certain adherents of religions or political ideologies." ("INTERFAITH INITIATIVES CAN ENSURE RICH CULTURAL DIVERSITY MADE WORLD MORE SECURE, NOT LESS, SECRETARY-GENERAL TELLS ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON CULTURE OF PEACE | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," United Nations, accessed August 7, 2017, https://www.un.org/press/en/2008/ga10782.doc.htm.)

[133] Fletcher, *Monopoly on salvation?: a feminist approach to religious pluralism*, 105.

this illustrate the effects of not including the practice of critical inquiry within communities.

Conclusion

Through observing the relationship between doubt and faith, critical inquiry's effectiveness in interreligious dialogue, and dialogue's impact on society, it is clear that education involving critical inquiry is a comprehensive form of combating the rise of fundamentalism (which can easily lead to extremism, hate, and violence towards groups different from one's own). This is true for fundamentalism found in any religious tradition, as has been seen through Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. The important aspect that critical inquiry teaches is that religious identity does not need to feel threatened upon the meeting of someone different. As the *Guidelines for Dialogue Between Christians and Muslims* points out, "Faith is nourished and its expression renewed by the encounter with other cultures, both secular and religious, past or present."[134] To fully realize this concept, critical inquiry must be practiced. In doing so, the myth that doubt implies a weak faith can be challenged, and people of differing beliefs can meet in fruitful dialogue that leads to a more culturally and religiously inclusive world. Critical inquiry supports the understanding that one will never have all the answers to all the questions of life, and learning how to be content with this fact. To believe one has all the answers limits the experiences one might gain from contact with others in this globalized world and, if the person is religious, actually ends up limiting the power and mystery of God.

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[134] Borrmans, *Guidelines for dialogue between Christians and Muslims,* 35.

In today's conflicts, religious and cultural differences spark debate and misunderstandings. It is especially important in the current climate to promote critical inquiry in our interreligious dialogue and in our interactions with people that come from different religious and cultural backgrounds. We must not only challenge others to be more open-minded but also remain aware of our own critical thinking. Doubt, questions, dialogue, and support for the targeted members of our communities by fundamentalist groups are crucial. Despite the discomfort it may cause, teaching critical inquiry needs to be at the forefront of education to combat these issues. With critical inquiry leading the way in our interactions, perhaps we can finally live in a religiously and culturally inclusive world.

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